

Dubois County Bridge #3002
On State Road #64 over Hunley Creek
Huntingburg Vicinity
Dubois County
Indiana

HAER NO. IN-98 HAER
IND
19-HUNT.V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Great Lakes System Support Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha Nebraska 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Dubois County Bridge #3002

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Location: On State Road #64 over Hunley Creek
Huntingburg Vicinity
Dubois County
Indiana
UTM: 16.507400. 4238810
QUAD: Huntingburg, Indiana

Date of
Construction: 1939-40

Engineer: J. V. Smythe

Present
Owner: Dubois County, Indiana

Present Use: Vehicular/Pedestrian Bridge.

Significance: The bridge is significant as one of the earliest
and best examples of continuous concrete T-beam
design undertaken by the Indiana State Highway
Commission.

Project
Information: The bridge was recorded in 1996 by Camille B.
Fife and Thomas W. Salmon II of The Westerly
Group, Inc., 556 W. 1175 N. Rd., Farmersburg IN
47850.

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Description: Dubois County Bridge #3002 is a three-span, continuous concrete T-beam structure. The spans are respectively, 40 feet 50 feet and 40 feet. The bridge is skewed and has a 28-foot roadway. Five variable-depth T-beams, are tied from span to span through continuous lines of reinforcing. The bridge rests on two piers, and the beams are slightly inset into the square lintel below which are three tapered square columns. The easternmost of these is sunk into the water of the creek, while the westernmost is buried in the first terrace of the west bank, occluding all but the upper, flared part.

The spandrels above the piers are elliptical, above them a projecting band defines the roadbed level on the north and south elevations. The rail is typical for spans built during this era by the Indiana State Highway Commission, and has recessed panels, with two intermediate and two end pedestals, only slightly elevated above the coping.

The bridge is located on State Road 64, an east/west artery which connects Huntingburg and towns to the east. Parallel to SR 64 and slightly south of it runs an active track of the Southern Railway. The railroad carries freight only. This line is visible from the bridge. North of the bridge is a small section of old State Road 64, which presently serves local residents only. Connecting this road to the present State Road 64 is a short county roadway which runs in a north/south direction immediately to the east of the bridge.

The bridge is surrounded by sproutland to the immediate north and to a lesser degree on the south. Mowed areas separate the bridge from the railroad which is only a short distance to the south. The bridge can clearly be seen from this vantage point.

History: The road which connects the town of Huntington, Indiana, with other towns to the east in southern Dubois County is a major artery which bisects this region, running in a general east/west

direction. During the nineteenth century, a parallel road (now old State Road 64) connected Huntingburg and the community immediately to the east, known as Bretzville. Dubois county, in southern Indiana, was founded during the first part of the nineteenth century. Located north of the Ohio River, it enjoyed a secondary benefit from the active commerce which flowed along the river. Because it was considerably inland, however, it was settled later than those counties which abutted the great river. The county seat, at Jasper is located less than ten miles from Bridge #3002 and State Road 64. During the early nineteenth century, it relied on the meandering Patoka River, which runs in a general northeast/southwest direction, for transport of commercial goods. An early north/south road connected the county seat with Huntingburg, Bretzville and other communities to the south.

Bridge #3002 is located in Patoka Township. The only city in the township, Huntingburg was incorporated in 1866, although the land upon which it is situated was laid out and entered in 1837.¹ The various roads which connected small towns along this tier in southern Indiana, were all only slightly improved dirt ways during the early part of the nineteenth century, the majority of creeks were crossed by fords. The road between Huntingburg and Bretzville, as previously mentioned, was located to the north of the present artery. Thus, according to an Atlas of 1876, it crossed Hunley Creek at a point before it split into two second-order streams.² However, by the late 1930s, when Bridge #3002 was built, it was necessary to construct three structures to cross the various branches which spread southward from this creek: Hunley Creek itself, spanned by Bridge #3002; Hunley Creek

¹ Hugo C. Songer, *The History of Huntingburg, Evansville, Indiana*: Hugo Songer, 1987, p. 39; George R. Wilson, C.E., *The History of Dubois county from it primitive days to 1910*, Jasper, Indiana: G. R. Wilson, 1910, p. 365.

² 1876 Atlas of Indiana, Dubois County page.

overflow to the east, near Bretzville, spanned by Bridge #3462 (1939); and Hunley Short or Bruner Creek to the west, crossed by Bridge #3001, which was built at the same time as Bridge #3002 and is similar in design.³

When the railroad first passed through Huntingburg in 1882, on its way from Louisville to St. Louis, changes in the southern Indiana town began to occur. Rapid growth in population took place - the population in 1880 was 781 persons, but by 1890 that figure had grown to 3,167.⁴ Traffic between smaller towns in Patoka Township and Huntingburg increased, as passengers and freight traveled to this regional center, to board trains at the depot and bring commodities to market.

Roads in Dubois County remained dirt for quite a while. The roadway east of Huntingburg was not surfaced with rock until 1903. Such improved roads in Patoka Township, radiated out from the city, to other parts of the township and the county.⁵

In May of 1939, after the Public Service Commission of Indiana authorized the establishment of a new grade crossing east of the present bridge, work on a new configuration of State Road 64 was well into the planning stage. The Southern Railway operated the railroad south of the present bridge at that time, with six passenger and ten freight trains daily (except Sunday). The present section of road was first surfaced with bituminous material in 1932. Also during this same time period (1939-1940) The county built the new section of road which now

³ "HABS/HAER Inventory", 1989, completed by James L. Cooper.

⁴ Songer, *History of Huntingburg*, p. 68.

⁵ Ibid., p. 63.

connects the new and old portions of State Road 64, and the old State Road was vacated.⁶

With the creation of the Indiana State Highway Commission in 1917, and its revision in 1919, state influence over county road and bridge work increased. During the depression years, Public Works Administration grants helped finance many miles of road and bridge work in Indiana, as it did in other states. By the end of 1942, the Indiana State Highway Commission (ISHC) included at least sixty seven hundred miles of paved roadway within its system. Bridge #3002 and the section of State Road 64 within which it lay, was a part of this system. ⁷

Plans for the concrete bridge over Hunley Creek were approved by Jesse V. Smythe, supervising bridge engineer with the Bureau of Design for the State Highway Commission.⁸ Mr. Smythe had joined the Commission in 1934 and would continue his service with the agency until 1942 when he took a leave of absence to serve as a Captain, later Lieutenant Colonel with the Army Air Force during World War II. He distinguished himself during his four years' tour of duty by winning the Legion of Merit for service in the Aleutian Islands where he commanded the photo intelligence section of the 11th Air Force. He resumed his post as engineer of bridge design in 1946. ⁹ He became the head of the bridge section of the State Highway Department before his retirement

⁶ Wilson, *History of Dubois County*, p. 364; Songer, *History of Huntingburg*, p. 63; Dubois County Commissioners Records, May 1927-November 1943, p. 125; Dubois County Road Record #10, p. 451.

⁷ James L. Cooper, *Artistry and Ingenuity in Artificial Stone, Indiana's Concrete Bridges, 1900-1942*, pp. 119-20; 124-25.

⁸ Drawing in the Vincennes Regional Office, Indiana Department of Transportation.

⁹ "Bridge Designer Out of Army; on Job Again", *Indianapolis News*, February 25, 1946, Pt. 1, P. 3, Col. 5.

and died in Indianapolis at the age of 76 on March 12, 1972.¹⁰

Like many other states, the ISHC relied upon approved standard bridge design elements provided by the Bureau of Public Roads. Indiana bridge engineers on the staff of the Highway Commission combined and adapted these designs to suit the individual situation and its requirements. This standardization of bridge design streamlined the process, especially during the peak years between 1920 and 1940, when construction plans for one hundred new bridges were prepared annually.¹¹

Indiana's bridge designers were rather late in incorporating the innovation of continuous beam bridge design. The railroads had made use of this technology earlier, with the construction of many continuous beam structures, for elevated highway grade separations between 1907 and 1917. Although the ISHC had experimented with continuous beam design in the late 1920s, no bridges were built along these lines until a decade later. Thus, Bridge #3002 and its companions became some of the first continuous beam and continuous slab structures to survive to the present.¹²

While much of Indiana's road and bridge building was conducted from the state capital, local activities continued apace (although local funding during the Depression years was limited). In Dubois County in 1930, \$24,403 was spent on county highways and \$17,925 on bridges.¹³ Supervising this activity, and coordinating the construction of State Highways through the county was the County Surveyor, and County Highway Superintendent. In 1939, when Bridge #3002 was

¹⁰ Obituary, *The Indianapolis News*, March 13, 1972.

¹¹ Cooper, *Artistry and Ingenuity*, pp. 137-150.

¹² Ibid., pp. 163, 171-74.

¹³ George Wilson, *Wilson's Notes*, Vol. XIII, p. 578.

constructed, these posts were combined in the person of Ben Leinenbach who had begun his tenure in the January session of that year. Mr. Leinenbach was appointed Highway Superintendent with a compensation of \$3 per mile, per year on the basis of 755.5 miles of county highways, with the stipulation that \$2 of that amount would be his salary and the other \$1 would be used for the cost of engineering and surveying of various highway projects. (If the balance of this amount remained unused, it reverted to the highway superintendent at the end of the year.) Although assistant highway supervisors were appointed for many townships, Superintendent Leinenbach declined to appoint supervisors for four of the county's townships (including Patoka Township). It is assumed that he managed all the work himself for these areas.

Although the contract for the bridges was let by the ISHC, a local Huntingburg firm was selected. The Olinger Construction Company, was founded by Raymond P. Olinger in 1916. Their first state contract for road construction was gained in 1923. The firm was responsible for construction on State Road 64 east and west of Huntingburg, as well as the great east/west Interstate 64 across the lower part of the state and Interstate 275 near Cincinnati, Ohio. R. P. Olinger died in 1976. By the 1980s, the firm had diversified into other fields and in 1986 the construction equipment was auctioned and that aspect of the business was closed.¹⁴

The Highway Superintendent reported monthly to the County Commissioners. During 1939, three men served as commissioners: William Rudolph, Frank X. Merkley and Herman Knies. These men, and the staff of the highway department would have been responsible for coordination with the state highway representatives, and for providing funds for related construction, such as the short road

¹⁴ Songer, *History of Huntingburg*, p.161.

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connecting old and new State Road 64, immediately
east of Bridge #3002.¹⁵

¹⁵ County Commissioners Record, May 1937 - November 1943, pp.
111-112.

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